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ABSTRACT

A significant need exists for new and expanded training programs for people who must interact with different cultures. When people experience a new cultural environment, they are likely to experience conflict between their own cultural predispositions and the values, beliefs, and opinions of the host culture. A training program, the Cultural Communication Capsule, can aid in cross-cultural adaptation by improving interpersonal and social communication skills. Employing the metaphor of inoculation, the capsule is intended to immunize and inoculate against the erosion of self-image and self-confidence that results when people who do not understand a host culture's norms feel that their own cultural norms under attack. The program consists of discussion questions to stimulate new value orientation and uses exercises and simulation games organized around 10 elements: (1) linguistic variables, (2) identity and status, (3) historical and political climates, (4) social values and structures, (5) economic trends, (6) technological language vocabularies, (7) nonverbal communication, (8) family/friends, (9) employment skills, and (10) company policy. The questions relate to cultural norms that underlie communication on-the-job specifically and the new cultural environment in general. (Sample questions for each of the 10 elements are provided.) (HOD)

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FURTHERING ADJUSTMENT: AN APPLICATION OF INOCULATION THEORY IN AN INTERCULTURAL CONTEXT

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A recent article in The International Journal of Intercultural Relations entitled "Training Personnel in Multinational Businesses: An Inoculation Approach" postulates that a significant need exists for new and expanded training programs for people relating to different cultures (Briggs & Harwood, 1982; 1). For example, one-third of all personnel transferred abroad return early because of maladjustment (Lanier, 1979; 160). The cost to firms and personnel is enormous in both money and reputation. Therefore, training in multinational businesses has a growing role.

Communicologists recognize that beliefs or norms which regulate communicative behaviors are culture specific (McGuire, 1967; 201). The expected behaviors within a culture are often implicit in the groups and sub-groups that comprise the scoiety. People in cultures often share their expectations and perceptions so completely they probably have never heard their beliefs attacked and might even think an attack was impossible. For example, in the United States most Americans agree that assertive behavior is admirable: the American way of life is the best way of life; English is a superior language; eye contact is desirable, but staring is rude. Other cultures may question these values.

The inoculation theory is analagous to the biological immunization process against certain types of diseases. According to William J. McGuire, people are made resistant to an attacking virus by pre-exposure to a weakened dose of the virus which stimulates their defenses to overcome any massive viral attack (1964; 200). In other words, a "shot" of the beliefs and behaviors from the host culture stimulates defenses against paralyzing culture shock which sends one-third of all personnel home because of maladjustment. In addition, a re-examination of one's own cultural truisms is imperative and the desired goal is flexibility and sensitivity toward cultural truisms of various cultures. Nehru recognized the inherent blindness natives have toward their own cultural truisms. According to Nehru in his Visit to America:

> If we seek to understand the people, we have to try to put ourselves, as far as we can, in that particular historical

and culltural background....It is not easy for a person of one country to enter into the background of another country. So there is great irritation, one fact that seems obvious to us is not immediately accepted by the other party nor does it seem obvious to him at all (1950; 58-9).

When people experience a new cultural environment, they are likely to experience conflict between their own culture predispositions and the values, beliefs, and opinions of the host culture. Often the loss of perceptual reinforcements from one's own culture can lead to feelings of helplessness, irritability and fear, commonly known as the phenomenon of "culture shock". Some authorities believe a certain amount of culture shock is desirable because this signifies a sensitivity to other cultures (e.g. Brein and David, 1971; Bane, 1972; Bochner and Kelly, 1974; Adler, 1975; and Gudykunst, Wiseman and Hammer, 1977). However, shock is not the smae as death; cultural death occurs when one totally rejects a culture or flees from it physically and/or mentally. Cultural death is marked by inflexibility, intolerance, rejection, and ineffectiveness.

ADVANTAGES OF THE CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CAPSULE

The goal of the Cultural Communication Capsule (C.C.C.) is to aid cross-cultural adaptation by improving interpersonal and social communication skills. The C.C.C. enhances the healing of psychological adjustment of personnel to new environments. The savings in time, energy, self-image, and resources is significant. The C.C.C. provides ten elements in a structured agenda that increases awareness of cultural beliefs and sensitivity to various culture's beliefs. Culture shock is not totally eliminated by the C.C.C., which is designed to increase the understanding of the beliefs and behaviors of another culture and acknowledge the subjective nature of cultural norms.

The capsule is intended to immunize and inoculate against the erosion of self-image and self-confidence that occurs as persons are confronted in foreign cultures by attacks against their own cultural norms and their lack of understanding of the host culture's norms. Understanding behaviors and beliefs of both the sender and receiver in a cultural confrontation are helpful in successfully adapting to a new environment or returning to a former one.

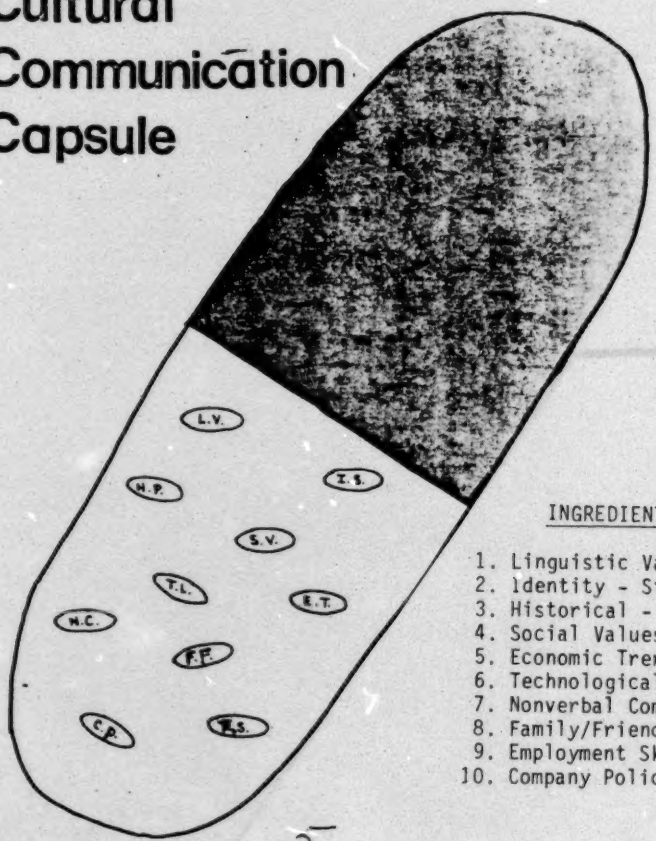
The C.C.C. agenda consists of discussion questions to stimulate new value orientation and then playing exercises and simulation games organized around ten elements:

1. Linguistic Variables

2. Identity and Status
3. Historical and Political Climates
4. Social Values and Structures
5. Economic Trends
6. Technological Language Vocabularies
7. Nonverbal Communication
8. Family/Friends
9. Employment Skills
10. Company Policy

Semantic reactions to these ten elements may either facilitate or frustrate effective communication in new cultures. The C.C.C. is intended to be quite comprehensive in nature and is used like an inoculation for the development of immunity against a disease; in this case, the debilitating effect of culture shock. By inoculating overseas-bound personnel with a dose of refutational defense, people will be more likely to develop a resistance to the inevitable strong attacks on their norms. The capsule, which is analagous to a pharmaceutical time-release capsule containing various elements, meets the needs of employees at appropriate times as they function in host cultures. The inoculation is achieved by the use of various questions which are studied, discussed, role-played, and carefully examined. These queries relate to cultural norms that predicate communication on-the-job specifically and in the new cultural environment in general. First, travelers need to recognize cultural truisms of their own culture and second, awareness of the cultural truisms of the host culture acts like an immunization against death, disease, debilitation in a host culture. The C.C.C. enhances the healing of psychological adjustment to a new ervironment.

Cultural Communication Capsule



INGREDIENTS

1. Linguistic Variables (L.V.)
2. Identity - Status (I.S.)
3. Historical - Political (H.P.)
4. Social Values (S.V.)
5. Economic Trends (E.T.)
6. Technological Language (T.L.)
7. Nonverbal Comm. (N.C.)
8. Family/Friends (F.F.)
9. Employment Skills (E.S.)
10. Company Policy (C.P.)

CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CAPSULE

The following elements outline some of the questions that should be discussed and role played in the training program associated with the communication capsule. The questions are designed to discover the beliefs and behaviors of a specific culture. First, complete the following questions in the context of your native culture and then complete the form a second time in terms of a host culture. Lack of answers may show glaring inadequacies and the necessity for expanded awareness of cultural norms.

Identify the culture: _____

1. Linguistic Variables

The first element for consideration in the Cultural Communication Capsule is the comprehension and verbalization of the host's language.

A. How well do you know the culture's language? (Spoken, read, or written?)

B. How was the language learned?

C. How much has English influenced the language?

D. What is the main language of the culture?

E. What is the "official" language of the culture?

F. What are some of the other languages of the culture?

G. How important are dialects? Which ones exist?

H. Do citizens know several languages? Do they use them at the same time?

I. What is the most educated, prestigious language to use?

J. Why is learning the language important?

K. How important is slang in the culture?

L. What slang should you know?

M. How can you improve your communication through the language?

N. What language is used in mass media?

O. How much is your credibility enhanced by knowing the language? Are natives suspect if a foreigner knows their language?

P. How is status shown in the use of language?

Q. How would you describe the language technically? For example, English has 45 phonemes and is subject-predicate oriented. Its alphabet is simple with 26 letters.

2. Identity and Status

A. How does a person in a given culture view "self"?

B. Is status mainly derived from one's job, profession, school, friends or family?

C. How restricted is individual autonomy? Does one "act" on behalf of others?

D. How does status relate to age?

E. What kinds of contacts are important to status enrichment?

F. What constitutes individual success?

G. What is the status of women?

H. How is an individual's identity or worth defined?

I. What are the signs of upper class?

3. Historical and Political Climates

A. Is the past history of a country revered?

B. What significant historical and political events are important to citizens?

C. In the political environment, are messages stated clearly?

D. How direct or straight-forward are messages?

E. Are messages couched in elaborate or indirect terms?

F. Is there minimum or maximum use of honorifics?

G. Are political persuasions related to the job?

H. What are the major holidays and how are they celebrated?

I. What are important political terms, parties or symbols?

J. What is the geographical size and population of the country?

K. What is the racial make up of the culture? How do races interact historically or politically?

L. What are the political scapegoats of the culture?

4. Social Values and Structures

A. How important is religion?

B. What is the general concept of God?

C. What is society's view of the future?

D. Are old traditions or new innovative approaches suspect or highly valued?

E. What is the social concept of time?

F. How valued is education?

G. What is considered a good and a superior education?

H. Is assertive behavior rewarded in the society?

I. Is popularity a premium asset?

J. How do persons express deep emotion in acceptable ways?

5. Economic Trends

A. What kind of economy does the country have?

B. How much is the culture industrialized?

C. What is its gross national product?

D. What is the base of the GNP?

E. What is the inflation rate?

F. What is its credit worthiness and debt to world banks?

G. How strong is its currency as compared to other nations?

H. What is its reliance on imports and exports?

I. What is the unemployment rate?

J. What bias against the United States and other economies exists?

6. Technological Language Vocabularies

A. How familiar is the culture with high technology equipment?

B. What is the familiarity with "pre-technical English"?

C. Are most of the costs of data processing on the training of people rather than on the equipment itself?

D. What is the familiarity with technical language?

E. What are the methods of updating technical language?

7. Nonverbal Communication

A. What are the basic approaches to proxemics (territoriality)?

B. What are the basic approaches to paralinguistics (tone of voice, expression, volume, rate, etc.)?

C. What are the basic approaches to kinesics (body movements)?

D. What are the basic approaches to haptics (touch)?

E. Is touching frequent or infrequent with members of the same and different sex in daily interactions?

F. Is the voice pitched high or low in friendly conversation?

G. How much eye contact is appropriate with close friends or slight acquaintances?

H. What dress is appropriate for the job and the home?

I. Describe the appearance of an attractive woman?

J. Describe the appearance of an attractive man?

K. What kinds of music are popular?

L. What are the daily hygiene habits?

M. What are popular foods and how is food prepared?

N. What nonverbal behavior is associated with listening?

P. What nonverbal communication accompanies a normal greeting for business associates? Loved ones?

8. Family / Friends

A. What are the expected behaviors of family and friends?

B. What are enjoyable activities for family & friends?

C. How large a home does a family expect? In the city? In the country?

D. How large a family including parents and children is expected?

E. How do marriages occur?

F. How is intercultural marriage viewed?

G. How many friends constitute the norm?

H. How does entertaining in the home occur?

I. Can friends visit spontaneously?

J. Is a nuclear or extended family situation endorsed?

K. Who is the head of the family?

L. Does that person act on behalf of the family or the clan?

M. In general, what is considered appropriate behavior for children?

N. What constitutes appropriate table manners and table talk?

9. Employment Skills (Task accomplishments, duties, and responsibilities of a role in a particular culture. Imagine a particular job or position_____)

A. What are the concepts of superior/subordinate relationships?

B. What are minimum requirements for particular jobs?

C. Is the superior involved in the subordinate's off-the-job life?

D. Is the manager expected to maintain interpersonal relationships with subordinates?

E. What is the ideal manager?

F. Is phatic communion (small talk) expected?

G. What are the components of a subordinate model?

H. What feedback is expected from the manager boss?

I. How do technical schools and universities function in the culture?

J. How is employment male or female dominated?

10. Company Policy (Institutional or employer policy. Imagine a particular company_____

A. What are the goals and objectives of the company in the culture?

B. What are the policies?

C. Are these goals and policies changing? If so, how?

D. Is mobility desirable?

E. Is length of service an asset or a sign of dependability and loyalty?

F. Is mobility a sign of ambition?

G. How are promotions viewed?

H. What are the communication goals of the company?

I. What is the expected commitment to the company?

J. What are the fringe benefits provided by the company?

K. How are business associates entertained?

CONCLUSION

When people have been inoculated with the Cultural Communication Capsule, their entry into host cultures should be smoother, less traumatic in general and more successful in job performance specifically. In summary, persons should understand the following elements: linguistic variables, identity and status, history and politics, social values and structures, economics, technological language, nonverbal communications, family / friends, employment skills and company policy. By internalizing norms based on the ten vital elements, persons should understand alternative patterns of communication behavior, rather than unsuccessfully attempting to use patterns from their native culture to fit the new situation.

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